



## ***News Release***

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### **Architects visit city to get input on old high school**

Three architects from the east coast came to Branson last Thursday and Friday to meet with city officials and residents of the Thompson Addition neighborhood and to evaluate the old downtown high school purchased by the city this summer.

The architects, Joel Mills and Erin Simmons from Washington D C. and Tom Liebel from Baltimore, are here because of a Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) grant, which the city of Branson applied for through the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

Before touring the high school building on Sixth Street, the architects visited with the mayor, Board of Aldermen and City Administrator Dean Kruithof in City Hall to find out what city officials have in mind for the property.

“We want to learn as much as we can of your expectations of that property,” said Mills. “We also want to learn as much as we can about the neighborhood, and we definitely want public participation to make the building a focal point of the community.”

Mayor Raeanne Presley said whatever goes in that building needs to bring a renewal to the neighborhood.

Opinions of aldermen varied from using some of the building for office space, demolishing the building to make way for green space – or to a place where talent, creativity and productivity can flourish.

Mills said projects like the old high school are interesting to tackle because they provide for creativity and can become very detailed.

“This project can show people that the community can have a very positive and explosive effect,” Mills said. “You can take an eye sore and turn it into something engaging. A dream turned into a reality.”

The architect team conducted two meetings with neighbors and toured the high school twice while here. They plan to return later this fall with six or seven more architectural professionals to continue the property evaluation. This visit will be about a week and very detailed, according to the architects.

“That’s when the real work will be done,” Liebel said.

A final report with recommendations for the property will be presented to the Board of Aldermen before the end of the year.

“We want to leave you in an advantages position to enhance the neighborhood,” said Mills.



*Architects Joel Mills (left), Tom Liebel and Erin Simmons tour the old Branson High School*